

# The LENINIST

May 1 1986 30p

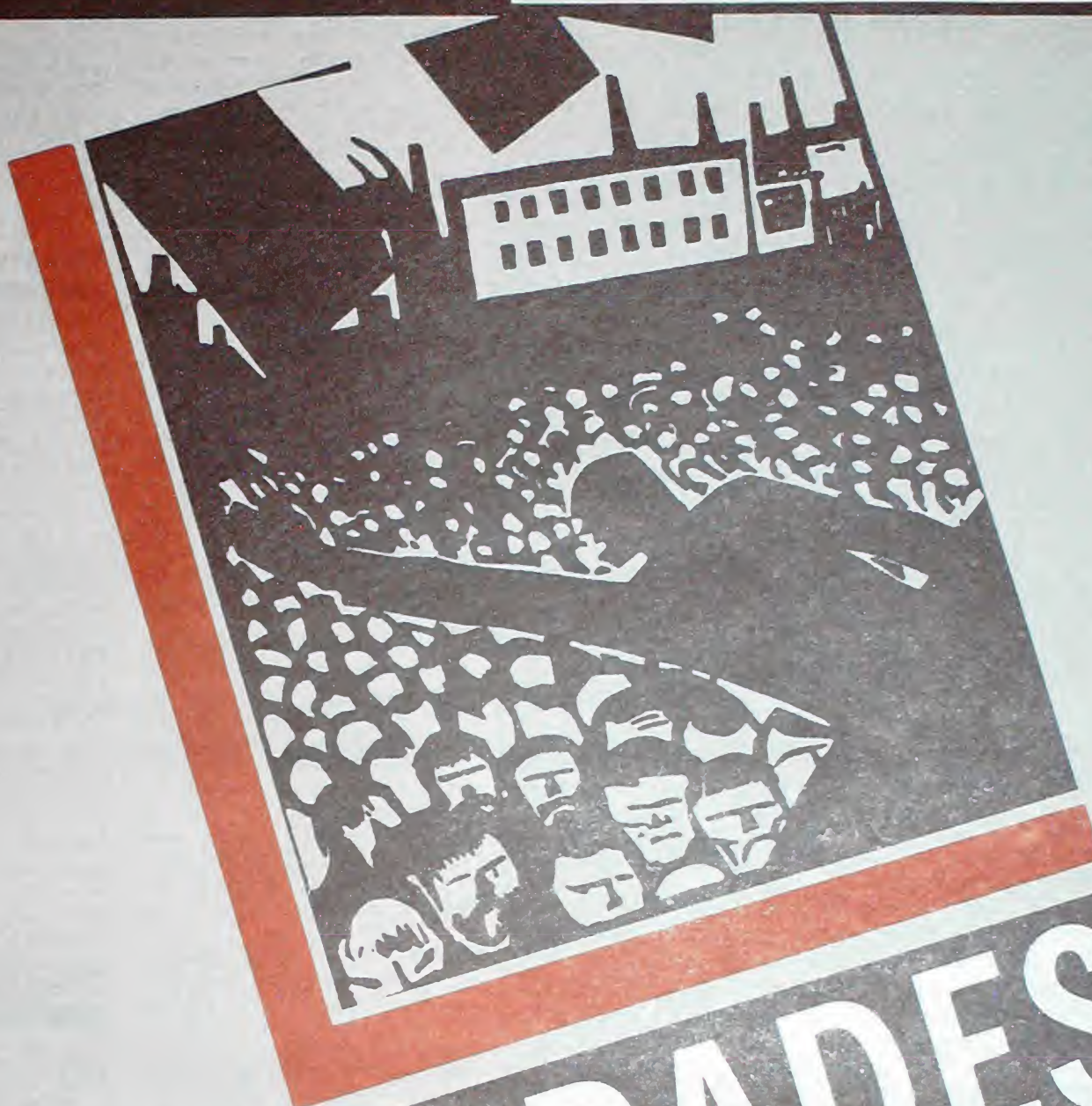
Party matters p.3

General Strike p.4 & 5

Philippines p.6

Wapping p.8

30



## RALLY COMRADES

★ Speakers from:  
The Leninist;  
Union of Turkish  
Progressives; Jack  
Collins, Kent NUM  
(in a personal capacity);  
David Kitson, former  
South African political  
prisoner (in a personal  
capacity)

★ Workers' Theatre

★ Revolutionary Music

★ 7.30pm, May 16,  
Friends Meeting House,  
Euston Road, London NW1

TO CELEBRATE NEW FORTNIGHTLY





## Some thoughts for May Day

THAT OUR FIRST fortnightly coincides with the 100th International Workers' Day is symbolic of our paper's deep and unyielding proletarian internationalism and we warmly invite our readers to join us on the May Day demonstration to Wapping (assemble behind our banners at Tower Hill from 8pm) to add their voices to our militant contingent.

*The Leninist* as a fortnightly is a great achievement for our readers, so again all friends are warmly invited to attend our rally on May 16 to celebrate the launch. This rally will have a strong internationalist content, not least with the presence of comrades from Turkey.

Our commitment to proletarian internationalism is firmly linked to, and flows from, the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism. We are therefore, like all genuine communists, bitterly opposed to the idea of seeing the working class movement only within the confines of nation states. Marxism-Leninism is internationalist or it is nothing.

Nationalist 'socialist' ideas have excused workers siding with their 'own' country and its ruling class in countless imperialist wars, from the conquest of African colonies at the end of the 19th century to the British Army terror in the Six Counties today. So, although we stand by the slogan that "workers have no country", in opposition to 'our' ruling class we also give unconditional support to the democratic struggle of all national liberation movements. Thus we are against all forms of reformist patriotism, not least the Alternative Economic Strategy (which chokes the struggle for socialism on social chauvinism) and for the democratic struggle of the IRA and Sinn Féin.

By definition Marxism-Leninism is revolutionary, not reformist. We understand that socialism will never come through the Labour Party and parliament. Workers will have to make revolution to achieve their historic goals.

This means smashing the bosses' state including its democratic sham of parliament. Socialism will, in other words, come through a revolutionary and armed working class, not a parliamentary bill. Direct working class democracy will replace bourgeois parliamentary cant through the transformation of working class organisations of struggle into working class organisations of administration.

Socialism will therefore see a powerful workers' militia balancing any standing army. Socialism can also curb bureaucracy from the outset through direct democracy, where delegates to all administrative bodies will receive no more than the average worker's wage and be subject to recall. The socialist state will as a result be a thousand times more democratic than what is called democracy in imperialist Britain.

Such proletarian democracy creates the best conditions for the growth of socialism into communism — a new historical epoch in which the state, nations, classes and all the evils of capitalism can be overcome. Communism will consequently know neither the oppression of women nor the curse of war which at present threatens the very survival of the human species.

It is to achieve communism we employ revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. These are not ends in themselves but means to an end. And to achieve these means it is necessary in turn to have other means, namely a mass revolutionary Communist Party.

This is the key to the struggle to overthrow the rotten capitalist system and open the way for the bright communist future. Without this organisation the working class is trapped in a never ending cycle of battles over wages and conditions within the capitalist system of wage slavery. The revolutionary Communist Party acts as a general staff in the class struggle, guiding the working class to the conquest of state power.

It is to reforge our Communist Party of Great Britain into such a party that *The Leninist* fortnightly is dedicated.

*The Editor*

Six months subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5; Europe £8; Rest of World £10 (airmail £17.50).

Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £10, Institutions £20; Europe £16, Institutions £26; Rest of World £20 (airmail £35), Institutions £30 (airmail £45).

Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. Issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p.

All cheques payable to November Publications.

Correspondence to: The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St. Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16 2BS.

Published by: November Publications, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX © World copyright May 1986.

## LETTERS

### Wardrive

Your lead story in the April edition hit the nail on the head. Behind the US attack on Libya is the anti-Soviet wardrive. Most other left papers could only come up with the narrowest Little England response. The *Morning Star* hardly mentioned the link with the Soviet Union. Instead of this, like a true John Bull Brit, it concentrated its comment on US bases in Britain.

In this it was far from alone. *Solidarity*-loving *Socialist Action* did likewise as did *7 Days* and *The New Worker*. In fact most of the left press located, as you quite rightly pointed out, the source of the US wardrive, not in the growing contradictions of capitalism, but in between Reagan's ears. For the lot of them, from the stuffy *Morning Star* to the bizarre Sparts, they came out with the "Reagan's a nutter" line. As if war is caused by psychology not social contradictions. World War I was not caused by Kaiser Bill's potty training nor was World War II the result of Hitler's teenage traumas. Perhaps the classic example of the 'nutter' theory of history is the SWP and their "Reagan's the real mad man" slogan.

Another weakness of the left has been the reflex response we have seen when it comes to Gadaffi. The left came out in a similar fashion over Argentina. Against Thatcher it felt duty bound to back the Argentinian fascist junta. They could not see that Argentinian finance capital was out to resolve its chronic domestic crisis by becoming imperialist and that the task of workers was to fight for the defeat of one's own ruling class, not its victory over Britain.

Now I am not saying Gadaffi's Libya is a medium developed capitalist country where finance capital has seized the state as in Argentina. Nonetheless who can deny that it is a capitalist country? As to the Gadaffi government: is it a revolutionary one which could uninterruptedly move from democratic to socialist tasks? I think not. Libya is not a Nicaragua, let alone an Afghanistan. Gadaffi might have financed the IRA, but he has also financed the corrupt WRP and even the fascist Grey Wolves in Turkey. Inconsistency has been the chief characteristic of his regime's foreign policy.

So, while defending Libya against US aggression, let's not go overboard in praising Gadaffi as if he was a communist revolutionary. Workers and peasants in Libya have every interest in securing their own rule against Libyan capitalism and its populist Bonaparte.

Best wishes for the future, and £25 for the new fortnightly.

Yours fraternally

Terry Nash

Bristol

### Looking forward

I very much enjoy reading *The Leninist* and look forward to the new fortnightly.

As a long time member of the Communist Party I have, over the last few years, had many illusions shattered. This is in part due to *The Leninist* itself but also our other 'communist' papers.

*Marxism Today* has become the mouthpiece for the liberal bourgeoisie. It specialises in anti-Sovietism, anti-Marxism and thoroughly fadish flights of anti-trade union fantasy. No wonder *The Guardian*, *Financial Times* etc love it. No wonder comrades like myself hate it.

*7 Days*, as you have said, is like the old *Morning Star*. Chris Myant is just as unimaginative and boring an editor, as Tony Chater. Myant is nothing more than a younger

version of Chater. If Chater has the personality of a paper cup Myant has the ability of one. His paper can't even decide what date it is. In the '15th March 1986' edition every page, other than the cover, had the date as '15 January 1986'.

As to *Straight Left*. How can communists produce such trash? Why don't they come out openly and say what they think. Why do they hide behind a 'broad labour movement' facade like *Straight Left*? Are they afraid?

Please find enclosed £15 for your £3,000 fund.

Peter King

Derby

### Congratulations

Congratulations on your plan to launch a *Leninist* fortnightly. As a monthly *The Leninist* has made interesting reading.

Your Communist Party is in grave trouble and I fear it is in the process of disintegration. Here in Australia our CP went through a similar degeneration leading to a split and the formation of the Australian Socialist Party. Since the split the CP has continued its course to the right and eventual organisational liquidationism. Fortunately the SP hasn't ended up as a sect like your NCP nor is it dissolving itself in the Labour Party as the *Morning Star* people are. Of course it is a centrist party — but better a centrist party which stands to the left of the international communist movement than no party.

Fraternally

Ron Cockburn

Parramatta

New South Wales

Australia

### Thug Murdoch

Since Mrs Thatcher has been Prime Minister the real essence of bourgeois law and democracy has been to crush all progress of the working class. They have been robbed of all their public assets, four million people have been robbed of the human right to a job, the loss of dignity to earn your own bread and butter, of getting married, having a home and family. The right to be a member of a trade union, to defend themselves against capitalist exploitation. The right to freedom of assembly, freedom of association. The rule of law has become neo-fascist law, using state police to rob the working class of its freedom.

Who can be a greater thug than Mr Rupert Murdoch, supported by Mrs Thatcher and Mr Tebbit's "rule of law"? Robbing over 5,000 workers of their rights to compensation, after years of making millions of profits for the Murdoch monopoly. They were all sacked because they used their right to strike to safeguard their jobs. What price 'democracy'? Law and democracy for which class?

Yours

Tom Hopkins (retired miner)

Caerphilly

### Rantings

There seems to be no end to your childish rantings. How dare you assume my political stance on anything be it the CCG, the *Morning Star*, the Communist Party, the CPSU or anything whatsoever.

I gave no examples (see letter *The Leninist* No.29) for the simple reason that this "sixth form/undergraduate style wit" runs through all the pages of *The Leninist*.

Why are you writing the journal? It seems to me that it is for your own self-satisfaction of "being in print". Who is the journal aimed at? A

rather younger less mature person than some of us happen to be after time and tide have taken their toll. Yours fraternally  
Bronwen Malik  
Swansea.

David Sherrif replies:

We do not assume comrade Malik's political stance; we know it, and her. Comrade you are hardly an OAP, and despite time and tide, you still have your wits about you. Your accusation that *The Leninist* is full of nothing more than "sixth form/undergraduate style wit" is so obviously wrong and a diversion that we are forced to the conclusion that you as a 'sage' of the broad labour movement have been stung into correspondence for other reasons than a dislike of humour as a political weapon. Could it be that our paper has exposed the Communist Campaign Group and shown it to be theoretically barren, organisationally dishonest and right moving? We leave it to our readers to judge.

### Strip searching

On Saturday April 5 the Irish Solidarity Movement held a successful demonstration opposing the strip searching of Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer in Brixton Prison.

The demonstration was followed by a lively two hour picket at the rear of the prison where many prisoners were able to hear and see the demonstration. Among those who addressed the picket were Dr Maire O'Shea and Liz Hill (sister of Paul Hill of the Guildford Four). Some prisoners waved encouragement through the bars.

A special message of support was sent to the picket from Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer who said that they would be able to hear the demonstration.

The trial of Ella O'Dwyer and Martina Anderson begins on May 5 1986. In the meantime there are weekly pickets of Brixton Prison every Saturday from 11.30 to 1.30 organised by the Irish Prisoners Appeal.

Yours fraternally

Pauline Sellars

London

P.S. We wish to thank your organisation for providing stewards. As you will know it was the presence of a significant number of stewards which prevented any fascist attack.

### Peace

I was pleased with the tone of comrade Jack Conrad's article on page one of *The Leninist* No.29. This is refreshingly unequivocal about the reality of choices being presented to socialists. The 'middle road' is no longer a practical option — and I feel that the US administration's brazenness in showing their hand needs an equally 'brazen' rebuttal of their claim to world leadership. We have to openly proclaim the revolutionary nature of the struggle. Yours in peace!

Colin Lee

East Midlands

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.

WRITE TO:  
The Editor  
BCM Box 928  
LONDON  
WC1N 3XX



## Wapping scabs

FOR SOME TIME there were rumours going around Party circles about two members crossing picket lines. Then the *Observer* of Sunday March 23 carried a story alleging that Stanley Levinson, former sports editor on the *Morning Star* and ex-*Star* journalist Chris Nawrat, were scabbing and had "been told to carry on" by the Communist Party.

For the *Morning Star* this was manna from heaven. It duly went ahead on March 27 with an editorial outlining the principle of not crossing picket lines and how, if the "workers at Wapping refused to cross that picket line, Murdoch's union-busting exercise would collapse." This was capped with an attack on the Communist Party's Industrial Department and comrade Pete Carter.

Following the *Observer* story the editorial noted "the Party had no comment to make." It went on to say "In the recent period the Party's leadership has shown itself more than willing to take disciplinary action against Party members... Yet when presented with Party members breaking the most fundamental rule of working class solidarity the response from the Party's industrial organiser is 'advice'."



Pete 'carry on scabbing' Carter?

The very next day the Party issued a statement slamming the *Morning Star* and the *Observer* for making "an unscrupulous attempt to discredit the Communist Party." It stated that "from the outset of the dispute the Party has been uncompromising in its support for the printworkers and its opposition to any trade unionists crossing the Wapping picket lines." As to comrades Levinson and Nawrat "the Party's policy has been made clear to them, as to all other communists". The statement closed by stating that "Democratic procedures are laid down in the Party rules for dealing with contraventions of individual members, and they will be strictly adhered to in all cases, without regard for pressures from the *Observer*, the *Morning Star* or any other outside body."

It must be said that this leaves a number of questions unanswered.

- Why has it taken the Party nine weeks to issue a public statement on comrades Levinson and Nawrat? Why was nothing forthcoming immediately after the *Observer* article? Why was it only after the *Morning Star*'s attack that a statement was issued?

- As we have said, the scabbing of these comrades was known for some time in Party circles. The branch of one of these comrades has been pressing for expulsion. So why has it taken so long to announce that "discussions" with the two "are planned"?

- Given the fact that the Party still stands by the principle of not crossing the Wapping picket line, why have the two only been publicly issued with "advice" after nine weeks of scabbing? Why have they not been instructed? After all the Party still believes in "instructing" members not to support this paper.

Unless the leadership acts immediately against Levinson and Nawrat it will be guilty of bringing the Party into disrepute.

## Tabloid - why the wait?

"MAY 12 launch for tabloid *Star*" announced the April 22 edition. About time many will be saying. After all in the March 1985 "pre-launch" dummy it was boldly declared: "Paper goes tabloid in bold survival plan". Then the Chaterites were saying that the only way to save the paper from collapse was to purchase on a leasing arrangement a new machine to print the paper out of crisis. Indeed Tony Chater insisted in an editorial way back in April 1984 that "without" the survival plan "the *Morning Star* will not last out the year."

Now, over two years later, the *Urbanite* Mk II has been installed long ago. It is said commercial work is being done but details are not given. The *Morning Star*'s fighting fund is almost always well short and circulation is in truth almost certainly still sharply downwards. Yet the paper has survived. How?

The survival plan did result in a substantial increase in share capital from a loyal readership but this is not income. It was argued that commercial work was needed to cover the cost of the leasing. This had to be "equivalent to securing the



"Pre-launch" dummy March 1985: why the delay?

contracts for four medium-size trade union monthly journals". Some suggested that this was conservative to say the least and that far more commercial work would be needed.

Early last year the editor said that when the new press was installed it would "enable the *Morning Star* to go tabloid in the very near future" (February 4 1985). A short while after when the new press was actually installed Mary Rosser announced that "the switch to a tabloid *Morning Star* was expected in about eight week's time." Why the delay in going over to the tabloid? We are not told.

## Communist - Straight Leftists hard front

THE LATEST, April, edition of the Straight Leftists hard front *Communist* makes rather boring reading. Its 25 poorly typed and duplicated pages are taken up with nine pages reprinted from *Political Affairs* (the monthly journal of the Communist Party of the USA), five pages reprinted from Soviet sources, another five on a rather pointless and academic rendition of well-established truths about the relationship between capitalism and money, leaving seven for commenting on questions such as CND campaigning, Soviet peace proposals and developments in the Communist Party.

This lack of presentation of the Straight Leftists' own position in their own publications is typical of a faction well-known for its inability to unite its poor theory with solid practice. This, as well as a failure to seriously confront the problems of our Party, is to be regretted. After all, the more the Straight Leftist leadership put their thoughts down in black and white the more they expose themselves as the centrists they are.

More than that. In the old, pre 'take out a £5 sub for six editions' of *Communist*, when it was designed for the edification of the immediate Straight Leftist circle, it contained some interesting titbits and insights into the thinking of the faction itself. Now that it has been broadened, now that it has gone semi-open, it makes very dull reading.

Nonetheless, a few points are worth comment. The Straight Leftists are extremely eager, to say the least, to prove their loyalty to the Party. This means that at present their contention that the place for all communists is in the Labour Party is put to one side. The same fate has befallen their strident and equally liquidationist objection to communists standing in parliamentary and local elections against Labourites. Instead of this they have gone over to a positive interpretation of Eurocommunism. Or so it would seem in April's *Communist*.

Not content with marvelling at comrade Gordon McLennan's "welcome resurgence of enthusiasm for living socialism" *Communist*

strives to defend, or at least excuse, comrade Pete Carter's recent ultra-Eurocommunist report to the March meeting of the Executive Committee. This right moving Eurocommunist, who has even earned the wrath of the left reformists in the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, highlights, says *Communist*, "important issues". Unfortunately *Communist* admits he comes up with "defeatist and reformist solutions". This apparently results from his failure to "recognise" that "big business is abandoning compromise and consensus".

Of course it is possible for genuine communists to make mistakes, to have intellectual slips or to be hampered by lack of information. Comrade Carter, though, does not fall into the category of genuine communist. His defeatism and reformism have deep ideological roots in British imperialist society; as did the defeatism and reformism of past opportunists like Germany's Eduard Bernstein, Britain's Ramsay MacDonald and America's Earl Browder.

*Communist* also gives the *Morning Star* a ticking off for the way in which it "dealt with Carter's statement". Its "editorialised and, in places, untruthful report, followed by a third of a page of letters attacking Carter ... will only undermine the credibility of the *Star* and drive away many of its readers."

Clearly the Straight Leftists find it impossible to be both 100% for the party and 100% opposed to opportunism as is *The Leninist*. Being centrists they try to occupy a non-existent middle ground which leads them to make excuses for inexcusable revisionism. This is all the while pretending to be red blooded revolutionaries and disciples of Marxism-Leninism. An oil and water mix that only centrists can contemplate let alone attempt to drink.

At £1 a copy, *Communist*, with its sentences which end mid way and then disappear off the page, is not only expensive and poorly produced, but is rotten with centrist dishonesty and unprincipled compromise.

The next AGM of the People's Press Printing Society (the co-op which owns the *Morning Star*) will soon be with us in early June. At the last AGM, as our readers will know, we made the last minute decision to back the candidates of the Executive Committee. We did this because we considered the *Morning Star*'s Management Committee to be on a course away from Communist Party politics. This prognosis has been fully confirmed. The *Morning Star* is moving towards Labourism and has become the mouthpiece for the Communist Campaign Group splitters. Although the Party now has 7 Days this is no substitute for a daily voice. Pro-Party communists should therefore make sure they have PPPS share cards ready for the AGM and that they vote in a way that will re-win the *Morning Star* for the Party which gave it birth and sustained it through over 50 years.

This year's Communist Party '£100,000' national fund appeal raised £71,607. This is £9,958 less than last year. Of course there has been a deep crisis in our ranks which has led to branches and boroughs ceasing to function or simply being liquidated. Only the very small South East Midlands district managed to reach its target figure. Now the Executive Committee has decided to arrange discussions with the Scottish and Welsh committees, "and with those districts in England" which did not achieve their aims, on "how to prevent financial problems impeding their political work." But perhaps the nature of our political work has something to do with the poor results we are getting. The fund organiser, comrade Eric Atkinson, and acting National Organiser, comrade John Peck, announced that the money raised "will assist our work... directed towards defeating Thatcher and the Tories at the next general election and the return of a Labour government". Not surprisingly with this thoroughly reformist and parliamentary aim the membership responded in thoroughly reformist and parliamentary fashion by giving donations averaging only £5 each.

**Communist Party** candidates in the London borough of Kensington and Chelsea have been informing voters of their star signs in their election campaigns. Comrade Mary Attenborough for instance, is Taurus — the bull. Presumably, the comrade included this piece of crucial information for the electorate because she was hard-pressed to fill an election address. She recently listed as one of her few qualifications to sit on London District Committee as being a "member of Philbeach Gardens Committee". We don't predict a great future for the comrade in the working class movement (but, she will soon meet a dark stranger and go on a long journey...).

**Our fund-raising** for *Umsebenzi* — the paper of the South African Communist Party — continues. We have been given the following note from a SACP representative for the editor of *Umsebenzi*: "We thank you for the additional £125 received from you for *Umsebenzi*." This £125 is on top of the £165 we have already raised. Over the last month or so the SACP have been in receipt of a steady trickle of donations; unfortunately none of them are anything like as big as those from *The Leninist*. We therefore repeat our call for all sections of the communist movement to help to build *Umsebenzi*. Take collections for it at every Party, AAM, and trade union meeting, on the streets and in the workplaces. For our part we will aim to take our total collection for *Umsebenzi* up to the £500 mark as soon as possible. Copies of *Umsebenzi* from, and donations to, c/o *Inkululeko Publications*, 39 Goodge St London W1. or c/o *The Leninist*, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX.



Well done comrades. Over the three months our £2,000 appeal has been running, you have shown that you are enthusiastic and committed to the launch of *The Leninist* as a fortnightly. You have gone over the top of each target we set. A month ago you broke the £2,000 barrier; now you have gone over our new target of £3,000. In fact at the time of our fund closing, we had received a grand total of £3,138.47p. This is a splendid achievement. It bodes well for the future. To all the wide range of friends and supporters who gave so generously we send you our heart-felt thanks. But remember, our financial needs have not come to an end. We must meet a £600 monthly target if the fortnightly is to continue and in the next few editions increase its size back to 12 and then 16 pages.



# Before and after 1926

*The 1926 General Strike took place 60 years ago this month. Its defeat marked the end to a sustained period of militant struggle. It will be celebrated by the left in Britain today with much hot air. The left Labourites will praise it, but fail to mention the treacherous role the left Labourites played in 1926. The Trotskyites will use the anniversary to attack the CPGB for rightism in 1926, all the while pursuing policies today far to the right of anything communists did in the 1920s. But for Leninists 1926 is not just of historical significance. Its lessons must be taken on board today because the capitalist offensive against our wages, jobs and rights promises to be fiercer, more sustained and deadly than anything we have seen before. The Councils of Action, the Workers' Defence Corps and revolutionary politics of 1926 must be taken to higher forms if we are to successfully fightback today.*



Waiting for local speakers: Methil workers organised a 700 strong Workers' Defence Corps in 1926

IMAGINE FOR A moment that you have lost your memory, that the reference points and cumulative experience that previously guided you through your life have in some way been taken from you. The world then would become a terrible, frightening and confusing place. Human beings who have had their slate wiped clean in this way would find themselves totally unable to operate in and protect themselves from the harsh exigencies of real life.

Our working class movement has lost its memory. Because of the degeneration of the Communist Party and the social amnesia induced by the long years of economic boom and mind-rotting consensus politics, even some of the most elementary lessons taught by the bitter experiences of the past now have to be painfully and slowly re-learned by our class. And this re-education is a vital task. Without assimilating the experiences of the struggles of the workers of previous generations our movement will be locked into the trap of repeating past errors and even wasting valuable time going over lessons that have already been taught.

The urgency of this task can be seen if we look at the General Strike of 1926 and the Miners' Great Strike of 1984-85, both in the similarities between these two strategic conflicts and also, crucially, in their differences. Major events such as these two strikes can provide us with the key to understanding the laws of the future class struggle.

## The background

The huge wave of industrial militancy that engulfed Britain during the period 1910-26 was, of course, a product of the relative decline of British imperialism in the face of the growing challenge from its rivals. Every school kid learns of the route by which Britain went from being the 'workshop of the world' to simply one amongst a number of great powers. In the 1890s, the dynamic capitals of Germany and the United States caught and then passed sluggish Britain in the key industrial indices of the time, steel and coal production. Apart from anything else, the fact that German and American industry was now starting to show a clean pair of heels to their indigenous production was a heavy psychological blow to the British bourgeoisie.

As we all know, Britain's main way of responding to the blocks it found in the way of capital accumulation arising from this growing competition, from the inner laws of capitalist economy and above all the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, was not to screw down on workers' living standards in the home-based industries, but to increase the export of capital and make the oppressed people of its expanding empire pay the bloody price for its difficulties.

Again, Britain briefly enjoyed a golden age largely by virtue of the fact that it was the first to become imperialist after being the first nation to industrialise on a large scale. At its peak the empire covered 13.3 million square miles and contained some 500 million people, or, in other words, roughly a quarter of the world's surface and a quarter of its total population. Its pre-

eminence, however, was again inevitably shortlived as the more dynamic capitalist economies of the world began to seek their place in the sun.

With the approach of the 20th century, the more far-sighted of the bourgeoisie in Britain began to realise something pretty drastic had to be done. Not only was the holy of holies of British capitalism, free trade, dumped with hardly a bat of the eyelid, but British employers now began to fight to hike the rate of exploitation of 'their' workers.

There was a brief period of erosion of proletarian living standards as workers went down to one defeat after another and their organisations haemorrhaged and shrank under the assault of the determined British ruling class. However, the temporary upturn in the world economy around 1910 did not produce a return to the halcyon days of social peace and a royalty-loving, pigeon-fancying working class as might be expected. On the contrary it produced a shattering strike wave of unprecedented proportions as the proletariat shook its head clear after the initial blows of the ruling class, and then attempted to make up for what they had lost in the preceding period.

In the years between 1910 to the outbreak of World War I the number of strikes shot up in an explosion of rank and file militancy not seen since the days of Chartism. Associated with this was a leap in trade union membership from 2,447,000 at the end of 1909 to 4,135,000 by the end of 1913, and events which caused the very foundation of the social order to go very wobbly indeed. The war, however, temporarily suppressed this turmoil beneath a wave of national chauvinism; but only temporarily. Precisely because the Labourite and trade union bureaucracy had more or less gone over lock, stock and barrel to support for the imperialist carnage, when the movement did re-emerge toward the end of the war, its rank and file and militant character was all the more pronounced. There was a new impetus given to the election of shop stewards and to the steady rise in unofficial actions.

The consequences of the war for the British bourgeoisie were equally significant. It entered the war as a creditor nation; it came out the other end victorious, but with a \$9 billion debt to the US. Driven by the lash of this debt and with the spectre of the revival of competition from Europe looming, the ruling class was forced once more on to the offensive. After the defeat of the miners in 1921, the other 'dominoes' of the labour movement followed: shipbuilders, engineers, boilermakers, seamen, cotton workers and agricultural workers all suffered wage cuts and a weakening in organisation. Trade union membership, which had reached a record 8,340,000 in 1920, plummeted to 4,250,000 in 1923 as a result of the combined effects of a steep rise in unemployment and the employers' offensive.

Still, there was an interregnum in British industrial relations. The stage was set for a strategic confrontation between the forces of capital and those of labour which would decide one way or the other the balance of forces for the coming period. Almost inevitably, the 'practi-

rian guard' of the movement, the miners, were yet again to find themselves in the front line of this battle.

## 1926 and After

What perhaps strikes one most about the prelude to the momentous events of 1926 is the almost pathological refusal of the official leadership of the working class movement to prepare seriously for the coming struggle. In contrast, having ducked and weaved in order to gain time, the ruling class set about the task of preparing to inflict a heavy defeat on the miners with gusto. It gave enthusiastic support to the supposedly 'private' strikebreaking Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS). Comrade Allen Hutt in his *British Trade Unionism* contrasted the state of readiness of the two sides:

"Blackleg 'shock troops' were given technical training. An entire dictatorial apparatus, placing power in the hands of ten ministerial Commissioners, was erected ... no counter-preparations at all were undertaken on the trade union side."

In fact, the venal and cowardly labour bureaucracy did nothing to prepare the class precisely *because* the government were preparing:

"... it was known that preparation had been made so elaborately by the government as to make the possibilities of success much less than in 1925." (p.104)

You could be forgiven for thinking these words were those of some 'dispassionate' bourgeois academic observer of the labour movement, commenting wryly on the whole 'sorry affair' of the 1926 General Strike after the dust had settled. I'm afraid not, however. They in fact belong to Walter Citrine, and in his mouth the words became an amazing admission of the criminal acts of negligence and spinelessness of the official leadership of the movement.

The Labour Party and the TUC waited, sweated and prayed for no confrontation with the government. Indeed, as Milliband has pointed out in his *Parliamentary Socialism*, the Labour Party conference of October 1925, on the very eve of battle, was "much more determined to guard their followers from communist contamination than warn them of the dangers to come." (p.128)

Only we in the Communist Party warned of the coming battles and attempted to lead the workers into seriously preparing for war. We fought illusions that the government's temporary stand-off was some sort of definitive 'victory'. R. Palme Dutt, in his *Notes of the Month in Labour Monthly* of September, 1925, laid it on the line:

"... The government regards the present strategic retreat as only a preparation for a decisive conflict in the future, and that it still stands by the objective of a general reduction of wages."

"The Royal Commission is once again, as always, only the smokescreen for the preparation for a decisive battle. There is no escape from the future conflict."





After 1926, militancy was channeled into the unemployed workers' struggle.

The Conservatives knew what the communists were up to and demands were heard at their Party Conference in Brighton on October 8, 1925 for the banning of the Communist Party and the arrest of its leaders. In fact, in the lead up to the General Strike, twelve leaders of the Party including comrades Pollitt, Inkpin and Gallacher were indeed arrested and found guilty on charges of seditious libel and incitement to mutiny; five received prison sentences of 12 months, the other seven of six months. In this way the Tories hoped to behead the only section of the labour movement that was actually encouraging workers to seriously prepare for the coming struggle. The attacks on the communists were evidence both of the general alarm felt in establishment circles about the labour situation (in particular the crisis in the mines) and also the threat that the ruling class realised our still tiny Communist Party of Great Britain posed to their system.

For alone of all the working class organisations, the Communist Party and the bodies it sponsored such as the National Minority Movement, were unequivocal in stating that the question that would inevitably be posed by the General Strike was that of state power. Early in the new year of 1926, the Central Committee of the CPGB adopted a defiant resolution:

"We believe that the British workers can turn their defensive into an offensive, and present a common demand for better conditions which will be a prelude to a complete victory over the capitalists."

Thus the Party began to give prominence to those practical measures that were necessary for the class to stand a chance not simply in a particular 'industrial' dispute, but in the future fight for state power itself. A few months after the imprisonment of the twelve leading members of the Party, the acting central committee issued a statement, reprinted in *Workers' Weekly* of January 15, 1926, which called for:

"Organisation of Workers' Defence Corps, composed of Trade Unionists and controlled by Trades' Councils, to protect Trade Union liberties against the Fascists, and calling upon the General Council to take steps to place the workers' case before the workers in the Army, Navy and Air Forces."

The National Minority Movement's Special Conference of Action on March 21, 1926, also put out the call for Workers' Defence Corps and the Party constantly agitated for this key demand in the lead-up to the General Strike. And in many areas of course, particularly those where communists had influence, the Defence Corps during the strike itself often effectively supplanted the police force and controlled working class districts much to the unease of the leadership of the TUC.

In fact the strike really lifted off and reached such heights despite the TUC not because of it. Militant workers understood that the attack on the miners was simply a prelude to a general

assault on the living standards of all of them, and went far beyond the tame official TUC guidelines for action. Trades Councils in many areas were transformed into Councils of Action, or embryonic soviets.

Under the direction of the Councils of Action and Trades Councils aggressive mass picketing, often protected from police assault by the Defence Corps, began to apply the implacable tourniquet of workers' power to the bourgeoisie's state machine. The workers' spontaneous organisation even began to display elements of dual power as they took socially important services such as the provision of electricity out of the nervous, sweaty hands of the ruling class. This very success of the strike and its growing politicisation terrified the trade union bureaucracy however and led to the sudden betrayal. Charles Dukes of the General and Municipal Workers' Union expressed the fears of the labour misleaders when he observed that "every day that the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control, and was wrecking the movement from one end to another." In other words, the still inexperienced, but revolutionary Communist Party of Great Britain.

### The Aftermath

However, for all its impressive work there was a giant discrepancy between the size of our Communist Party and the objective tasks that were becoming increasingly imminent for us in those days. The extent to which we could realistically expect to influence the final outcome of the strike was limited. So as a result of the treachery of the labour bureaucracy, the sellout of the General Strike and the eventually crushing defeat of the miners, the defeat of '26 was strategic in its proportions. Membership of the trade unions and the Labour Party plummeted and a rightist drift started in the union leadership bringing it into line with the dirty strikebreaking leadership of the Labour Party. Similarly, the NMM had by 1929 lost most of its support, (at the fifth congress of Profintern in August 1930, Lozovsky bluntly described the trade union situation in Britain and the influence and work of the Communist Party as "very bold") the NMM had "no basis" and very little organisation, whereas previously it had represented a mass movement of workers.

These declines and retreats were symptomatic of the fact that after the defeat of 1926, militancy in the heart of the working class movement was eliminated. It continued only on the fringes of the class, most particularly among the unemployed. In some ways one could almost say that the NMM became the National Unemployed Workers' Movement as militants in various industries, without effective trade union organisation left to protect them, were victimised and thrown out of work in the bosses' big purge. Despite our Party's disastrously sectarian 'Third Period' line between 1929-33,

the communist-led National Unemployed Workers' Movement went from only about 10,000 members in 1929 to some 37,000 members by the end of 1931. This increased militancy at the edges of the working class was a response to the fact that the necessary restructuring of British capitalism did not, at the end of the day, take place on the backs of employed labour, but on the backs of the colonies and the growing number of unemployed. With the cushion of its massive empire, the advantage of the period being one of falling prices combined with a temporary economic upswing in the late 20s, the living standards of those actually in work were more or less constantly rising throughout the period 1926-1939.

While the Party correctly denounced the traitors of the TUC, material conditions meant that it could not really capitalise on its right shift and in fact communist mass influence actually slumped. Despite the mouthing-off of various Trot sects who want to see practically nothing positive in the history of our Party, 1926 was certainly not some sort of full blown October Revolution aborted by the treachery of the Communist Party. Rather it must be seen as the final puncturing of a period of militancy which began in 1910; subsequent attempts by the now dangerously marginalised Communist Party to reactivate the combativeness of the organised labour movement, given the material conditions of the time, were more or less doomed to failure.

### Today

In our view, the Miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 was almost exactly the other way around: it was a mass, strategic confrontation that opened a forthcoming period of militancy, not closed it. Since the end of the 70s onwards, the basis for social peace and consensus politics in Britain has slowly eroded. From the Wilson government in the late 60s onwards, there have been efforts by the capitalists to at least reduce the bargaining power of the working class. From Barbara Castle's 'In Place of Strife', through Heath's Industrial Relations Act to the Labour Party's Social Contract, the bourgeoisie attempted to subtly tip the balance of forces in its favour in order to allow it to hike up exploitation without getting too much gyp from the workers.

The softly softly approach had to give way to a tougher line at some point and thus the election of Thatcher in 1979 marked a return on the part of the ruling class to the type of class war position that characterised their approach in British industrial relations from the early part of this century. Detailed plans have been laid to defeat the trade union movement:

- The Civil Contingencies Unit is a standing Cabinet committee which brings together top civil servants and ministers with a brief to provide strategies for smashing strikes.
- The police are now a nationally organised, highly trained and effective strike-breaking

force, itching to try out its new toys on workers' undefended picket lines.

- The already extensive anti-workers' movement laws have been finely honed and are starting, as printers can now tell you, to make any form of effective industrial action illegal.

Characteristically, the leadership of our movement have done nothing to prepare an adequate response.

The first term of Thatcher's administration saw defeats inflicted on the working class, but none of a decisive nature. The Tories could not simply carry on picking off section by section like the steelworkers, as the need to press ahead with attacks on the living standards to bolster flagging British capitalism is quite urgent nowadays. The Tories thus sought and won a strategic confrontation with a key section of the working class: the miners.

It was a strategic fight, yes. The Tories won it, of course. Yet it was not a strategic defeat in the same way that 1926 was for the workers' movement. Just compare the aftermath of the two strikes. While the defeat of the miners has undoubtedly coloured the nature of workers' battles in the coming period, militancy has not been totally crushed and the very organisations of the working class come under sustained and crushing assault as they did in the aftermath of '26. Workers will still fight and the Tories will have to return to the offensive in order to impose that strategic defeat on our class.

Why will the Conservatives, or indeed any government that seeks to protect the interests of capital, have to return to the attack? Well, simply because this time around Britain has no empire left to cosset it economically. In '26 it did not have to attack its working class in the same way as, say, the unhappy German bourgeoisie were forced to do, because its huge overseas possessions effectively cushioned the British imperialist economy. When British imperialism stumbles next time, it is going to come crashing down on its arse with nothing underneath it. Today Britain is the weakest of all major imperialist economies in its domestic economic sphere. It has no empire, it has a heavy parasitic reliance on paper money, banking, commodity trading, stock broking, insurance and jobbing. It really has got 'come the next general crisis, I am in BIG trouble' stamped all over it.

Let us just clarify what we are talking about when we say 'crisis'. The crash of 1929 in the depths of the last general crisis wiped out some 42% of world industrial production and led to a 65% decrease in world trade. The current gargantuan over-extension of the credit system creates conditions for a crash that will make the last one look like a run on the bank in Toy Town. What we are talking about here is a crash that is inversely proportionate to the greatest ever boom in capitalism's history — the 1950s and 1960s. So far capitalism has prevented a slump into a new general crisis by stretching the credit system to its limits. But the higher you fly, the harder you hit the ground when the bubble bursts.

### Conclusion

Peter Heathfield, the general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers in the *Morning Star* of April 9 had rather different conclusions to us about 1926 and the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85. Peter and presumably the *Star* want capitalism to concoct a "co-ordinated energy policy based on coal". We want a revolution. We are confident too that the room British imperialism has for manoeuvre in order to avoid one is narrowing. Those of us in the Communist Party committed to revolution and working class state power thus look forward with enthusiasm to the tasks the coming period will throw up to us. In the miners' Great Strike, we could do little more than 'remember' for our class some of the basic lessons taught by '26. In the future we will be pushing our organisation to its very limits in order to link this 'collective memory' role of communists with the arms and legs of workers actually in struggle. We will push our organisation in order to create a tough cadre force, willing to give their lives to the cause of the revolution. Our determination and unshakeable resolve flows from our understanding of the character of the coming period. Unlike the aftermath of 1926, the conditions are maturing where it will be possible to take revolutionary politics to the heart of the working class movement; to build a mass, granite hard, vanguard Communist Party. On the success of our tendency, the tendency of Leninism, in reorganising our Communist Party of Great Britain, depends the very success of our class's struggle for state power. Comrades, now is not the time for demoralisation or to stand aloof. Now is the time to JOIN US!

Alec Long



# and...

■ The New Communist Party really is plumbing new depths in its abject prostration before Labourism. According to the *New Worker* of April 11, Neil Kinnock "did little during the miners' strike", but at least he "doesn't support the scabs". If our memory serves us correctly, Ramsay MacKinnock did quite a lot during the strike in the way of denouncing the heroic miners. The NCP can choose to believe that Kinnock has 'snubbed' the UDM if it wishes (based on some diplomatic refusal of Kinnock to share a platform with them) — for us however, and for every militant miner, he is the biggest scabbing bastard of them all.

■ Predictably, the *Morning Star* of April 14 uncritically reports Sogat general secretary Brenda Dean's condemnation of "picket line violence" in Southend. Instead of condoning Dean's despicable attacks on striking printworkers, the *Star*, if it had any revolutionary guts in it at all, should be fighting for the violence of printers to be organised and thus made more effective. But then, if it had any revolutionary guts, it wouldn't really be the *Morning Star*, would it ...?

■ An enterprising stallholder in Exmouth is doing a roaring trade in little rubber *Thatchers* for dogs to chew. The local Tory election agent is fighting for a boycott of the figurines which he describes as "tasteless". We in the Leninist however, commissioned a poll that found that eight out of ten conservative party branches that expressed a preference said their local agents quite enjoyed the rubber *Maggies* — there's no accounting for 'taste'.

■ Charlie Potting of the WRP Banderite (or possibly not Banderite — watch this space) polemicalises in *Workers' Press* of April 12 against the vile history of the WRP's support for the murder by the Ba'athist regime of Iraq of 21 communists who organised cells in the army. The WRP excused the executions at the time by asking "What would the Soviet rulers do if they caught Ba'athists organising in the Red Army?" Potting's reply amounts to the rather lame idea that we cannot blame (let alone execute) Iraqi communists for what the "Soviet bureaucracy" would do.

Our position would be that if Ba'athists (i.e. counterrevolutionaries) were organising cells in the Red Army, we would wholeheartedly support their purge. WRP members need to go far deeper in their critique of the past and begin to question the validity of a world view that leads them to denounce the world communist movement as "counterrevolutionary" in the first place.

## INTERNATIONAL

UNTIL 1896 the Philippines were a Spanish colony. By the nineties of the last century, Spain, like many colonial powers, found it had a popular anti-colonial war on its hands. The US entered into the conflict, ostensibly to aid the Filipinos, but soon took possession of the islands. Far from acquiescent, the Filipino proletariat and peasantry carried on the anti-colonial fight, now against the far better armed Americans.

From very early on the working class raised its flag for national liberation. In Manila in 1903, 100,000 workers took to the streets on May Day to demand an eight hour day and an end to colonialism. Many militant workers' and peasants' organisations emerged in the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1924 the Workers' Party became the first working class party in the Philippines. That same year elements of the Filipino workers' movement contacted the Communist International and five leaders of the movement were invited to attend a conference of the Pacific Trade Union Secretariat of the International in Canton by a visiting leader of the Communist Party of the USA.

The Comintern's chief representative for South East Asia, Tan Malaka, was stationed in the Philippines from 1925 to 1927, when he was extradited. This still gave him time to consolidate links between the Filipino workers and the Comintern, especially through the medium of the US Party.

### The PKP

On August 26 1930 sixty representatives of workers' and peasants' organisations held the founding congress of the Partido Komunista ng Philipinas. Two months later they began publication of their official organ, *Titis* (the *Spark*). By September 1931 the PKP along with the militant trade union federation, the KAP, had been proscribed by colonial authorities worried at the potential of the PKP in the situation of growing activism of the proletariat, and the ever-increasing frequency of peasant revolts. Both organisations continued to organise illegally.

The PKP drew towards it many of the peasants revolutionised by the uprisings of the mid-1930s, especially in the wake of a defeated armed revolt staged by the peasant-based Sakdal Party. Well into the Popular Frontist period the PKP's Comintern-dictated rightward shift bore fruit of sorts, when the Party cobbled together a merger between the Socialist Party and the PKP, with many of the erstwhile(?) social-democrats being drawn on to the new party's (still the PKP) leadership.

With the entry of the US and the USSR into the Second World War, the PKP called for cooperation with the US colonialists against German fascism and Japanese militarism, shelving the struggle for national liberation. When the Japanese invaded in 1942 the PKP organised guerrilla resistance, the Huk.

Despite, and perhaps because of, the failure of the popular front with the US and the national bourgeoisie, the Huk were remarkably successful, increasing rapidly, with 20,000 regular guerrillas and 50,000 in reserve.

The Comintern had divided the war into 'goodies' and 'baddies', the 'goodies' being any state on the same side (superficially) as the Soviet Union. The PKP, loyally took this at face value. So when the reconquest of the Philippines came in 1945 the PKP and the Huk were badly disorientated. Short on memory they expected the return of some benevolent big brother. Unsurprisingly this turned out not to



NPA guerrilla: now fighting Aquino

*Aquino's political revolution exposed all forms of opportunism*

## THE FILIPINO ROAD

be the case, the US disarmed the Huk wherever possible, arrested its leaders along with many leading communists, shot others and generally set about reversing the gains of the Huk-led resistance.

After the US had decisively countered any potential resistance, it granted the Philippines formal independence, holding elections in April 1946. The PKP stood candidates through its front organisation, the Democratic Alliance. Six were elected and immediately prevented from taking their seats.

Throughout this period, although PKP propaganda had favoured legal work, many of the rank and file had been forced to continue the armed struggle out of sheer necessity. Consequently, between 1947 and '48, the leadership changed strategy to readjust to the armed struggle. This corresponded to a change in leadership, Jose Lava replacing the more placid Pedro Castro. The Huk were reorganised into the National Liberation Army (HMB), and the emphasis was once more placed firmly on to guerrilla war.

The fortunes of the PKP changed adversely late in 1950, when on October 18 its entire political bureau was arrested and many military documents seized. From then on the Filipino government, cheek by jowl with the US military, had the upper hand, and by 1955 the HMB had been virtually decimated.

The Party responded with a 'reflex reaction' — back to parliamentarism. This orientation was effectively scuttled in 1957 when the PKP, just about tolerated by the post-war government, was clamped down on with a vengeance. The PKP retreated further, disbanding the Party cells, effectively liquidating the increasingly inactive Party. The PKP was to be fired into life around the time of Marcos' election in 1965, through its internal conflicts, in essence between the conservative forces of the leadership and leftward moving sections of the youth of the Party.

The ideologue of this trend was Jose Maria Sison, who rose through the ranks of the student movement in the 60s to become the organiser

for the PKP's youth wing, Nationalist Youth, in 1964. Sison, in a document on the history of the PKP commissioned by the Party, was sharply critical of the leadership from the early 50s onwards, attacking what he felt to be an attempt at a premature seizure of power in the Huk war, and the later liquidation of the Party cells. Sison favoured a reversion to the armed struggle, but with different perspectives. He was expelled, along with those who supported his criticisms, in April 1967.

### After the split

With the expulsion of the 'renegade' pro guerrilla war trend the PKP rapidly abandoned the vestiges of its illegal work and already inactive Huk units, and began desperately to court the favour of the national bourgeoisie, according to the PKP personified in Marcos. They attempted to clothe him in the robes of anti-US imperialism, on the somewhat dubious grounds that he was improving the national economy.

The PKP fully revealed its opportunism after Marcos imposed martial law in 1972; indeed it verged on outright sycophancy to this autocratic little slug. Comrade William Pomeroy of the CPUSA, and an ex-Huk, weakly attempts to defend the PKP's opportunism over Marcos by stating that the PKP "has been able to operate openly and semi-legally since 1974." (*Morning Star*, September 13 1983)

What was so significant about 1974? Well, PKP Politbureau members met with Marcos to present him ceremoniously with 19 weapons as living proof of their acquiescence. Of course Marcos let them operate. Who could be afraid of such a party?

Sooner or later such a policy on the part of the PKP threatened to forfeit all their support among the masses. When circumstances forced them to turn their 'anti-Marcos' face to the people, they did so in a dishonest fashion, not explaining their mistakes.

As has already been described, the Communist Party of the Philippines

was formed from a young left-moving current in the PKP around Sison. After their expulsion on December 26 1968 he and ten supporters held the founding congress of the CPP. Sison at 29 was elected chairman of the new party.

Soon after they joined forces with a small band of Huk still active, but no longer with PKP leadership. This was the New People's Army, initially with 35 rifles and pistols between 60 guerrillas. Later they formally adopted Maoism, under the influence of the Cultural Revolution. Since then they have gone from strength to strength to become the only growing insurgency movement in South East Asia, with a base of support of millions through their legal front, the National Democratic Front.

### The CPP

Although they do seem to be moving away from Maoism, they still retain many of the ideological pitfalls that laid the PKP low. Sison's thesis of 1970 also hankered after broad alliances.

Like the PKP, the CPP's NDF wants to "protect national capital against foreign monopoly capital." Also, while they are undoubtedly more militant than the PKP, sections show a certain desire to patch up some sort of shoddy compromise deal with Aquino.

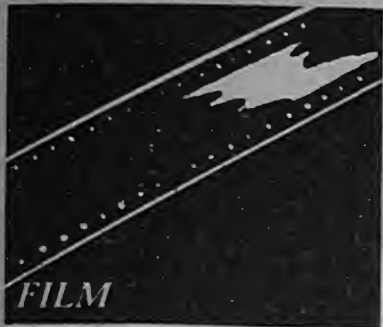
The PKP urged voters to write anti-imperialist slogans on their ballot papers, supporting neither candidate. But instead of fighting for working class hegemony over the anti-Marcos struggle they hurled mud at the CPP and NPA, accusing them of being taken over by the left wing of the Catholic church. They have therefore, by and large, marginalised themselves.

The CPP, after toying with the idea of backing Aquino, rightly decided against it and urged a boycott of the elections. But they also did not fight for workers to take independent action. Objectively, they stood passively through a period rich with revolutionary potential.

Alan Merrik



## Flawed Epic



Akira Kurosawa (director), *Ran*.

KUROSAWA'S *Ran* is epic, even Homeric in its stature and stands as a fitting end to the outstanding career of this Japanese director whose films have included such landmarks as *The Throne of Blood* (*Macbeth*) and *The Seven Samurai*. Adapting Shakespeare's *King Lear* to 16th century Japan, Kurosawa has managed to retain much of the dramatic structure of the original, without an actual line of Shakespeare being spoken in the entire piece.

The central figure, the ageing Great Lord Hidetora/Lear, after a life spent in more or less constant battle, decides to abdicate and divide the kingdom he has carved out between his three sons. The youngest son protests against the arbitrary and reckless decision of his father and for his pains is banished along with a faithful warlord, Tango. The eldest son assumes headship of the clan briefly. After his treacherous murder he is succeeded by the second son. While both live, they systematically humiliate their father, the Great Lord, into madness. The motive force behind the Great Lord's degradation is the Lady Kaede. She is a real nasty piece of work, whose affiliation (and sexual favours) seem to pass from son to son with the realm (for me, a quite remarkable performance this by Mieko Harada, able to combine in one scene elements of cold white fury, with a cruel eroticism as when she licks the knife wounds she has made on the neck of the second brother in the seduction sequence). She is driven by the desire to gain vengeance on the Great Lord who had annihilated her clan.

Kurosawa claims that in his deep study of *Lear*, he found parallels between the action in the play and the history of 16th century Japan, torn as it was by civil war and factional disputes between feudal warlords. The central problem for Kurosawa however, and a problem that dictates his art at the end of the day, contains a flawed essence. In both the history of ancient Japan and also in the *Lear* of Shakespeare

we can look below the surface and see real social forces and classes at work. In Kurosawa's *Ran*, the Great Lord Hidetora, after 50 years in battle to establish his hegemony in the region, throws away this blessed stability and the peace he longs for so deeply, in an instant and on a foolish whim.

In Shakespeare's *Lear*, the anarchy and 'chaos' ('Ran' is roughly the Japanese equivalent of the English word 'chaos') exist beyond society, dark forces counterposed to the moral order of the time. Shakespeare was a transitional figure in cultural terms between the stability of the old medieval world and the new emergent forces of capitalism in the same way as say, Rabelais and Cervantes were. They were children of the revolutionary storms that broke up medieval feudalism: thus they were able to mock and lash the vices and irrationalities of the old world, but they, Shakespeare included, were far from entirely comfortable or uncritical of the new. Shakespeare's *Lear* therefore reflects this uneasy balance, but even the most bleak of his tragedies, as in *Lear*, have also a sense of atonement, resolution and even redemption. As Hazlitt wrote of Shakespeare's characters:

"In Shakespeare there is a continual composition and decomposition of its (the characters of the protagonist — IM) elements, a fermentation of every particle in the whole mass, by its alternative affinity or antipathy to order principles which are brought into contact with it. Till the experiment is tried we do not know the result, the turn the character will take in its new circumstances."

In Kurosawa's *Ran*, it seems order is imposed only momentarily and in a fragile way on the malevolent irrationality of the world: witness how easily the stability that the Great Lord has finally managed to impose after half a century of quite ruthless suppression is lost. Social order is built against the will of history and so the characters that move across this historical stage, both 'good' and 'bad' alike, are hapless victims of the world's cruel arbitrariness. Even Buddha, says the Great Lord to his fool, has deserted the world. And his fool counsels madness as the only 'rational' response.

A strong central performance from Tatsuya Nakadai as Lear/Hidetora gives the film a cohesion it might otherwise lack. The use of the forms and traditions of Noh theatre by the character of the Great Lord — he appears first in a demon mask and degenerates in the hollow death mask of a tormented old man — enrich the observation of the descent of his character, and in parallel with him society, into



King Lear in Japan

madness. Less satisfying is the character of the fool, played by Shinosuke Idehata, a transvestite Japanese pop singer who never achieves sufficient presence in the action to give full rein to the potential of the figure of the fool in Shakespeare's play.

Rather than parallels with Shakespeare, the cross-cultural

reference that often crept into my mind while watching this film was with the work of Thomas Hardy. Like scenes from Hardy's novels, in *Ran* the human figures are overwhelmed by the awesome nature of the scenery against which the action is played. Both have a form of cosmic fatalism where the human condition is

seen as naturally tragic and anarchic. Both for the most part, like practically all bourgeois art today, consist of unrelieved pessimism. All of which takes nothing of course from the fine artistic merit of either Hardy or Kurosawa. *Ran* is a great and important film. See it if you can.

Ian Mahoney

## Factional Sheet



*Stand Firm*, April 1986, pp.5, np.

*STAND FIRM* says it is produced by "members and supporters of the CPGB on Tyneside, Wearside, Cumbria and Durham." In truth it is a Straight Leftist factional sheet. What makes it particularly interesting is that it is published at all. In most districts the Straight Leftists are keeping their heads well down and attacking the Chaterite CCGers for provoking the Euro powers that be.

The Northern District Committee used to be under the leadership of Straight Leftists. That is until 16 St. John Street organised a palace coup which saw comrade Brian Topping, the District Secretary, expelled and Euro nominees installed. The Straight Leftists were naturally infuriated. But they recognised that, if they were patient, their day could come again.

Having some sort of a base

among the membership it has obviously proved vital to present some sort of fightback to prevent disillusionment and a drift toward the Labour Party. This seems to have led to the decision to produce *Stand Firm*.

In terms of its April edition and its content, it is pretty much standard Straight Leftist fare. We get fulsome praise for the CPSU's 27th Congress, an optimistic appraisal of the Spanish referendum to stay in NATO and a call to close Sellafield but it says in true AES style, in order to cover itself with the trade union movement, to "win popular support", the Sellafield call must be "linked to steps to create alternative employment".

More revealing though is the stance it takes on the *Morning Star*. This "remains", *Stand Firm* insists, in the face of criticism, a mouthpiece for the CCG. But turning truth on its head, it is also an "invaluable tool for our job as revolutionaries." That "revolutionaries" need a pro-Labour Party, pro-British Road, pro-AES, anti-CPGB voice of the CCG, is news to us. But then the Straight Leftists have always been have-it-both-ways centrists and not revolutionaries.

Also of some interest are the details it carries in a single sided supplement about the incumbent Northern District regime. In the run up to the congress of the Northern District, *Stand Firm* promises to

publish monthly and to publish all the goings on.

The April supplement is full of tales of "widespread financial corruption" to the tune of £800 — no mean sum for a CPGB district nowadays. It alleges the culprit of this embezzlement was promoted, used to line up Straight Leftist comrades for expulsion and then, having being found with hands in the till, has not even been disciplined. *Stand Firm* says: one law for supporters of *Marxism Today*, another for its opponents.

But despite all the talk in *Stand Firm* about principle, we cannot but help remember it was Straight Leftists on the YCL General Council who proposed that support for *The Leninist* be an expellable offence. Of course they found themselves, as opportunities do, hoisted on their own factional petard. For shortly after support for the *The Leninist* became an expellable offence, *Straight Left* was added to the list of publications support for which would be deemed an expellable offence. If this were not enough we still find Straight Leftists advocating the expulsion of Leninists because "we are the real Leninists".

Because of this we can only doubt *Stand Firm's* commitment to the CPGB, let alone its conversion from malleable and double standards. For all Straight Leftist comrades these questions must be faced.

David Sherrif



## SPECIAL OFFER

The Leninist  
theoretical journal

Nos 1-6 Winter 1981 -  
Winter 1984.

Normally £1 each  
(plus p&p).

Now only £5 for all  
six post free.

BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

	6 months	1 year
Britain & Ireland	£5 <input type="checkbox"/>	£10 <input type="checkbox"/>
Europe	£8 <input type="checkbox"/>	£16 <input type="checkbox"/>
Rest of World	£10 <input type="checkbox"/>	£20 <input type="checkbox"/>

For more detailed rates see page two

I enclose a cheque/PO for £..... made out to November Publications

Please start my subscription with issue no.....

I enclose a donation for £..... made out to November Publications

NAME

ADDRESS

Return to: Subscriptions, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

SUBSCRIBE





## Bring out the Fleet

MANY MILITANT printworkers are now beginning to wonder about the likelihood of victory over Murdoch. *The Sun*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, and the *News of the World* might be experiencing certain problems in circulation. Yet who can doubt that Murdoch can cope with this in his cost cutting, union busting Fortress Wapping, defended as it is by the full power of the bosses' state and its devious anti-union legislation.

The leadership of Sogat and the NGA allowed Murdoch to get safely ensconced in Wapping before deigning to fight. With his highly profitable titles secured behind barbed wire and with scab labour recruited, courtesy of the EETPU, Murdoch triggered off his strike provoking operation. All the cards seemed to be in his hand. Court proceedings which led to the print unions suffering injunctions and sequestrations, TNT lorries and massive police protection. Murdoch chose the time and place. The unions could only cry 'unfair'. Such non-leadership by Sogat and the NGA does not inspire confidence, except of course in Murdoch's camp.

### Picketing

Yes, there has been mass picketing. But this has been led by Dean and Dubbins in the manner of Grand Old Dukes of York and kept within the fatal confines of TUC guidelines.

If it was ten or twenty times bigger, contemptuous of TUC guidelines, properly deployed and defended, it could stop the TNT scab operation. Unfortunately it has been kept ineffective. The mere fact that undefended printworkers and their supporters are confronted by well trained and tooled up Metropolitan Police ensures this, as is evidenced by the 500 arrests at the time of writing and the consummate ease with which the massed pickets are controlled, herded and bullied.

As if this were not enough, union officials do everything to prevent effective picketing in case violence breaks out in front of the everpresent TV cameras. This is done so as not to alienate a supposedly TV-glued and determined public opinion. Thus picketing is reduced to a symbolic gesture not built into a mighty

weapon of working class persuasion, confrontation and intimidation.

### Public opinion

The unconvincing Wapping battle cry of Sogat 82's Brenda Dean and the NGA's Tony Dubbins has all along been: 'win public opinion'. Against all the evidence so far these two leaders insist this is the key which will open the door to reinstatement, compensation, and union recognition for the 5,000 sacked News International printers.

This Dean/Dubbins strategy means every effort is made to court Mr and Mrs Average *Sun*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times* and the *News of the World* reader. After all, for Dean and Dubbins, upon them rests the fate of the whole struggle. Not having much faith in the trade union consciousness of either middle class Tories who read *The Times*, or working class Tories who read the *Sun*, a boycott of the Murdoch titles is urged, using sentimental 'Murdoch sacked my daddy' posters or appeals to a public school 'sense of fair play'.

In the same Saatchi and Saatchi spirit, in an attempt to appeal to these atomised Tories and their law and order prejudices, proposals were put forward to scale down the Wapping picket. This was done under the defeatist banner of lessening the inconvenience suffered by the local population in Wapping and preventing clashes with the police.

### Chorus

Although it is ineffective (or perhaps because of this), the Dean/Dubbins PR version of industrial struggle has been greeted by a chorus of praise from a wide spectrum of 'society'.

Neil (scab) Kinnock says the print unions' campaign is marvellous. In contrast to his head down posture in the miners' Great Strike he feels perfectly safe using every opportunity to demonstrate his command of the clever metaphor and heady, if vacant, rhetoric, to promote the Sogat/NGA case.

Likewise, loving the under dog, at least as long as it remains a dog which does not bite if kicked, sections of the soggy, charity mongering, middle ground of

British politics from tut-tutting SDP vicars to condescending leader writers on *The* (hypocritical) *Guardian*, worry about "Stalag Wapping" and praise the print unions for making trade union rights at Wapping as worthy a cause as those at GCHQ.

Praise has also come from opposed sections of our communist movement.

The *Morning Star* lavishes editorials and lead stories on the official line coming from Sogat House and Graphical House as part of its quest to become the voice of trade union officialdom. Hardly surprisingly the Communist Campaign Group is no different. It projects the very same official position from its public platforms. This is predictable. This political tendency supports the official trade union bureaucracy as a reflex reaction.

The idea that communists have a duty to offer revolutionary leadership is anathema for them. Moreover as they have congenial links with the print union bureaucracy, through prominent CCG leaders like Hicks and Freeman, acting as cheerleaders is considered the pinnacle of Marxist-Leninist principle.

### Brenda Dean

For our still right-moving Euro-communists, Brenda Dean is the very model of a modern trade union general secretary. She not only has her sex to endear her to the Euro-feminist heart but she has taken on board the Euro lessons of the miners' Great Strike. The lessons of the Great Strike for these comrades are, as is well known, the need to win public sympathy, retreat from militancy and at all costs avoid violence.

In truth there can be little doubt that the NUM leadership did everything in its power to project the miners' 1984-5 Great Strike as a patriotic crusade in defence of Britain's industries. Whether this was right or wrong, there can be no argument about the massive groundswell of public sympathy the miners enjoyed.

Tens of millions of pounds were collected along with enormous amounts of food. So only a charlatan or a fool would suggest

that the miners did not have a swathe of support in the population on a scale the printworkers only dream of at present.

The miners' Great Strike was not all about violence and alienating public opinion. It had support from brickies and bishops. And who can forget the pit women? They were the very backbone of the strike and they stood and fought on picket lines alongside their men, in the process implicitly and often explicitly rejecting feminism.

Despite all this the miners were defeated.

### Violence

We have argued that this was not because of the miners' militancy but because this militancy was not pointed in a revolutionary direction and because no mass revolutionary vanguard Communist Party existed which could generalise the miners' struggle into a united workers' offensive.

We also argued that the miners needed to employ violence in an organised, disciplined and revolutionary fashion. We therefore called for Workers' Defence Corps, the like of which existed during the 1926 General Strike. These organs of working class power could make picketing effective and take the whole struggle on to a higher stage.

So while the Kinnockites, liberals and opportunists told the miners that they were strong when they had the sympathy of public opinion, the Leninists were saying something very different. We said: you gain public sympathy when you are strong. This was indeed the case.

### Elan

In its first three or four months the Great Strike swept forward. The miners, their families and supporters were brimming with confidence, morale was high and militants felt a sense of elan and purpose. The far-sighted — both bourgeois and proletarian — could catch a glimpse of a revolutionary future. The hit squads were the forerunner of an armed proletarian militia; in the Women Against Pit Closures there was the sniff of a mass revolutionary working class women's movement, and in the Miners' Support Committees the embryo of soviets could be seen.

These months saw sympathy swell. Other sections of the class began to itch with impatience, wanted to join the miners in rolling back the years of Thatcherism and settle with their own bosses in the process.

Dockers, local government workers, carworkers, and railway workers all came within inches of forming a united front with the miners. Tragically the union bigwigs had other ideas. In 11th hour Judas deals with worried employers strike action was nipped in the bud. Then came Orgreave, the empty rhetoric of the TUC in September 1984 and the massive police organised scab herding.

Isolated, armed only with heroic grit and bitter determination the miners fought on. But by mid-winter the die of defeat was cast. Demands for financial aid became more desperate, TUC promises were shown to be worthless and promised power cuts failed to materialise.

Then the church was brought to the fore, especially in South Wales and Scotland. Their pious pleas for an honourable settlement only spurred MacGregor and the Tories on — they smelt blood. Working class solidarity became public sympathy and in its turn it slowly slipped away along with the willingness of other sections of the

class to offer meaningful assistance let alone enter into the fray. Strength breeds strength, weakness breeds weakness. This is a central lesson of the miners' Great Strike.

### What now?

With this in mind what should the print workers be doing now?

We say the picketing must become truly massive, it must be defended with Workers' Defence Corps, centrally the whole of the national press must be brought out and strike and sympathy action spread to as many other sections of the working class as possible.

Murdoch is out to grind the printworkers down in a war of attrition which he is quite prepared to see go on for years. Against this the Dean/Dubbins reliance on public sympathy is worse than useless.

In a propaganda war, claim and counter claim can be painlessly hit back and forward without affecting production at Wapping. So offers of the old *Times* press for the labour movement are almost ritualistically countered with offers to limit picketing. All the while, individual by individual, strikers become tired and their number is eroded as some find new jobs and others become eligible for retirement pensions. Clearly the longer the dispute lasts the better for Murdoch.

And in this case what is good for Murdoch is good for the other press barons. Already they are putting into operation their own manpower cutting operations in paper after paper. The publishers of *The Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Express*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mirror* have all taken a leaf out of Murdoch's book but all with the agreement of Dean and Dubbins.

### The rot

The rot must be stopped. This can only be done by militants linking the struggle for union rights and recognition at Wapping to resistance to job cutting exercises by other employers.

What printworkers need is not cheerleaders for Dean and Dubbins. No, what is needed is militants getting together across the NGA, Sogat, NUJ, AEUW, EETPU divide and the establishment of joint committees. Only with such organisations can the rank and file take the running of the Wapping dispute into their own hands and really get Murdoch and the other press barons worried by bringing out all national newspapers.

The struggle at Wapping must not be allowed to stay in the rut of protests acceptable to scum like Kinnock and Willis who are only after, at best, a pyrrhic victory. It must not be allowed to remain an isolated case, good for Labourite parliamentary anti-Tory hot air but no good for the sacked 5,000. It must not be allowed to become a union-free monument to the weakness of the working class.

Militant printworkers, their supporters in the Printworkers, Support Groups, and militants in every sector of industry, transport and commerce, must take the lead in upping the stakes by organising more and bigger flying pickets. But above all we must beat Murdoch's war of attrition by bringing out all workers in the national press (what used to be called Fleet Street). Only this perspective can bring justice to the sacked 5,000, stop the arrogant Murdoch in his tracks, and reverse the job slashing trend in the print.

Jack Conrad

- For a national newspaper strike
- Mobilise the rank and file
- Bring out Fleet Street